

Testimony for Use at Budget Hearings

Ladies and Gentleman of the Division of the Budget,

Thank you for holding this meeting and allowing me the privilege and opportunity to talk with you today. My name is Ted Osborne and I am here as Director of Recycling at Modern Recycling and as a member of the New York State Association for Reduction Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR). NYSAR is a State recycling association of over 100 professionals that represent the interests of local governments, solid waste authorities, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and other institutions that are committed to waste reduction, material reuse and recycling.

- We are here to ask Governor Spitzer to include an increase the Municipal Recycling Line of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to fifteen million dollars from the current funding level of 9.825 million dollars. The Current waiting list is now more that 30 million dollars, and grown more than 5 million dollars in the last 3 years.

We would also like to express support for the objectives of the Friends of New York's Environment. NYSAR3 supports:

- A \$500 million dedicated EPF by 2010. We also support increasing the EPF to \$300 million in the FY2008-2009 State Budget. (In order to reach our 2010 goal, the Fund needs to continue to incrementally increase in the next budget.)
- Continued revitalization of environmental staff at state agencies (DEC, DED, OPRHP, Ag and Markets and more) through general fund increases to state agency budgets.
- We also ask the Governor to again include the provisions of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill in his budget.

First, however, we would like to thank Governor Spitzer for his support in increasing the EPF to two hundred and fifty million dollars for the 2007-2008 budget year and for starting the processes of reversing the disastrous effects of staffing cuts to environmental programs instituted during the Pataki administration. We would also like to thank the Governor for his overall commitment to New York State's Environment.

In the recycling community we have already seen the effects of the environmental leadership displayed by the Governor and his administration, with initiatives to jumpstart primary and secondary school recycling, commercial paper recycling and college and university recycling. We want to take this opportunity to thank the Governor and his administration for these initiatives.

New York State continues to rely on local governments, counties and solid waste authorities to implement the bulk of New York's recycling program. These programs are mandated by the solid waste management act of 1988 which requires all municipalities to have mandatory recycling programs and sets a 50% waste reduction and recycling goal for the state, based largely on these programs.

These municipalities rely on funding from the Municipal Recycling Line of the EPF to implement this mandate and work toward this goal. That line supports the Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling [grant] Program (MWRRP) and the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) [Grant] Program, both of which are administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation, Bureau of Solid Waste, Reduction and Recycling. These

important programs provide fifty percent matching funding for the investments of municipalities in recycling capital investment and infrastructure, recycling promotion and education programs and household chemical collections.

Unfortunately, there is currently approximately a thirty million dollar backlog in the funding of the recycling programs due to funding shortfalls. Although the department makes it a priority to fund household chemical collections, as they should, communities throughout the state have applied for funding for recycling projects and have had to wait years, currently an average of three years, for this matching funding to become available. Such delays have threatened the jobs of recycling professionals and made it impossible in some communities to plan for recycling infrastructure improvements and education programs. An increase of the Municipal Recycling Programs line by a little over five million dollars will not completely wipe out the backlog but it will go a long way in addressing the problem.

NYSAR3 also supports the general goals of the Friends of New York's Environment. NYSAR3 supports a five hundred million EPF by 2010. Doubling the size of EPF should allow adequate funding of recycling programs while not cutting into other environmental needs.

NYSAR3 also believes that further restorations of environmental staff at DEC and other agencies are necessary to protect our environment. Present staffing levels at the Environmental Services Unit of the Department of Economic Development drastically limits their ability to promote sustainable business practices, pollution prevention and recycling

in the commercial and industrial sectors. Increased DEC staffing for recycling coordinators in all regional offices and more people to provide technical assistance to localities and to assist with rapid turnarounds of grant programs is also essential.

Finally, to pay for these initiatives while improving a tremendously successful recycling program, NYSAR3 strongly supports the Governor's inclusion of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill in his 2008-2009 budget. A recent forum in Albany on commercial recycling found almost unanimous agreement that the best way to facilitate beverage container recycling programs in businesses and institutions is to expand the bottle law to include non-carbonated beverages. The placement of a deposit of as little as five cents on all beverage containers would provide the incentive necessary for custodial staffs to skim the now valuable materials out of the waste stream and give it a new life through recycling, while at the same time providing additional income for these often low paid workers. This is currently done with bottles containing deposits and there is no reason to believe that it would not occur for the beverage containers that would receive deposits through expanding the current redemption program.

Thank you again very much for your attention and for allowing me the opportunity and privilege to present testimony before you today.